

Oldbury College of Sport

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104011
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	308483
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Clive Kempton HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1604
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Harvey
Headteacher	John Martin
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Pound Road Oldbury B68 8NE
Telephone number	01215 447521
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

Oldbury College of Sport officially became one school in January 2007 as a result of the amalgamation of two adjacent schools, Warley High College of Sport and Langley High School. The school continues to share the two sites until a new school is opened on the Warley site in 2011. Warley High was last inspected in March 2004 and judged to be a very good and effective school, improving rapidly. Langley High School was last inspected in June 2006, and judged to require significant improvement in relation to achievement, standards, teaching and learning. As a result, the school was issued with a notice to improve. A monitoring visit to the school in December 2006 judged that the school had made good progress with these identified issues. This is the first time that Oldbury College of Sport has been inspected. The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Oldbury College of Sport is a popular and oversubscribed school, in the south of Sandwell in the heart of the Black Country. Half of the students are drawn from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The majority of students are White British. In September 2008, the school plans to develop post-16 provision.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Oldbury College of Sport is a satisfactory and improving school. Over the last few months, this improvement has gained momentum as the hard work by the staff is beginning to reap rewards. The strong and determined leadership of the headteacher, with excellent support from his governors and commitment from his senior leadership team, has successfully cemented the two schools into one in the 18 months since the single school came into being. A significant achievement. Leadership and management across the school are good. Senior managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development and acknowledge that there still remains much to do, especially in developing the consistency of teaching, improving attendance, and focusing all the staff on a small number of key issues aimed at further raising standards. The school is heavily oversubscribed and a focal point of the local community, notably in the range of out of hours opportunities it provides. One parent described the school as a place where 'pupils come first'.

Students enter and leave the school with standards of attainment that are broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement overall. Progress is currently no better than satisfactory because there is too much variation in the quality of teaching. There have been initial staffing difficulties with the new school and too much of students' learning has been disrupted by staff turbulence. This situation is now improving and the quality of teaching is good or better in many lessons, but teachers do not have a consistent approach to marking, and do not always check carefully enough in lessons how well students are learning or how well the needs of different ability groups are being met. The sports college status is having an impact on standards in physical education (PE), both in the school and in partner primary schools. Increasingly, sport is having an impact in other subjects too, as sport related units of work are being developed. Examples include sporting heroes painted in the style of a famous artist; a local football club working with identified students in literacy and numeracy; and rowing machines used to generate data to apply in mathematics.

Students receive good care, guidance and support. Through a robust system of tracking academic progress, students who fall behind with their work are well targeted for additional support. The academic coaches and mentors ensure that students quickly get back on track. New students arriving in Year 7 settle quickly, most are already very familiar with the building due to their attendance whilst at primary school of many of the after school clubs. Good work experience and careers guidance are provided for older students. More are now moving on to further education and training. Plans for the development of a sixth form in collaboration with other local schools are well advanced.

The personal development of students is satisfactory and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They grow into mature, responsible and caring young adults. Most enjoy school and have positive attitudes to their learning. They know how to behave well in class and around the school and inspectors noted some exemplary behaviour during the inspection. However, students and parents report that behaviour can be more variable during cover lessons on normal school days, with a minority of students occasionally disrupting others' learning.

The curriculum is good, notably the way the school is developing the vocational curriculum for older students to ensure that they take courses that they enjoy. Another strong feature is the

wide range of after school clubs and activities, ranging from traditional sports and arts clubs to rhythmical gymnastics and cheerleading.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching by consistently marking students' work and by regularly checking throughout lessons that students understand the learning intentions and that students of all abilities are appropriately challenged.
- Ensure that strategic planning focuses on the few key issues essential to raise standards.
- Work with parents to improve attendance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards when students enter the school have risen in recent years and are broadly average. In Years 9 and 11, standards have risen too and are now in line with expectations. In Year 11, attainment has varied significantly between students who started at the two different schools, especially where English and mathematics are concerned. These and other discrepancies are reducing as the schools unite and expectations rise. Predictions for 2008 show that most students have met or exceeded their targets and GCSE results are expected to be similar to those in 2007.

Achievement is satisfactory overall, but has been pulled down by recent weak achievement in science, and because girls have done less well than boys. Staffing and other improvements in science have begun to improve progress this year. Girls and other groups are now achieving as well as others because the school uses better systems to identify when students are falling behind targets. Provision then ensures that support, such as academic coaching or challenge for more able students, is provided where needed. A good curriculum, more closely matching individuals' needs, is also helping to improve achievement.

The pace of students' progress across the school is also starting to increase and most are now on track to achieve or exceed the challenging targets set. Students with learning difficulties benefit from well-focused support in areas such as reading, where a significant number make good progress from very low standards on entry.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

At the time the two former schools were merged, necessary urgent action was taken to improve behaviour and this led to a large number of mostly temporary exclusions. These are now far fewer and students participate wholeheartedly in their learning and life at school. They are punctual to lessons, follow instructions they are given and work hard in class when taught well. Behaviour is of concern to parents but students' conduct around the school is good.

Attendance is inadequate. Too many students are missing days at school. Action taken by the school, including legal proceedings, has turned the tide, although attendance remains a concern. Students want to contribute to their school and community. There are many opportunities to do so, including acting as buddies for new arrivals, taking on sports leadership roles, looking

after the environment and undertaking charity work. The school council is currently not in operation and this greatly limits the way that students may formally and democratically contribute to the running of their school.

Students work safely in class and adopt a healthy lifestyle, with large numbers taking part in sports activities. Students are given sound preparation for future study and employment through good work experience and as a result of sound progress in developing their academic standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Students value the cultural diversity of their own community and respect different histories and traditions. They have a good moral sense, act responsibly without being asked and enjoy working cooperatively with adults and their peers. Students develop as mature, caring and thoughtful members of the community through good opportunities in their lessons for discussing the big questions about their beliefs, attitudes and future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Students are keen to learn and most enjoy their lessons as a result of good relationships between students and teachers and good behaviour in class. There is some disruption to learning where students experience frequent changes of teacher. In these classes, students do not make the progress they should.

Teachers use their good subject knowledge to engage students in a range of interesting activities. Many conduct lessons at a challenging pace. Lessons begin well and clear objectives are set, but teachers do not pay enough attention to checks on understanding.

Teaching assistants support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well in class, so that they make at least the same progress as others. Academic coaches help to boost the performance of students at risk of underachievement in Year 11. In lessons, not all teachers offer a variety of tasks matched to students' individual prior attainment and capabilities. This sometimes results in insufficient challenge for students who are gifted and talented or those who need additional support.

Assessment data are being used increasingly well to inform planning, but homework is intermittently set and the quality of marking is variable. Teachers set students realistic targets but do not always show them clearly how to improve their work. Students learn well when they assess their own work and explain things to each other, although this does not happen often enough to develop their skills of working independently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The merger of the two schools has improved the quality of curricular provision for all students.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum throughout Years 7 to 9. The Year 7 nurture group enables vulnerable students to be introduced gradually into secondary schooling. Discrete setting in six subjects is effective in ensuring work is well matched to students' prior attainment. The accelerated courses in Year 9 make good provision for the most able students. There is satisfactory provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT and statutory requirements are met. All students have the recommended two hours of PE per week.

In addition to a core curriculum in Years 10 and 11, a number of flexible pathways effectively meet the needs of individual students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The increased range of vocational courses taught within the school is beginning to meet their career aspirations. A targeted group of students attend school or work placements each week with high rates of attendance. Work experience or business and enterprise days give all students valuable insight into the world of work.

Education for careers and health and safety is good and prepares students well for post-16 pathways. The sports college specialism has created exciting and popular opportunities for learning, both on and off site, many of which lead to additional qualifications. The curriculum is enhanced by a rich programme of extra-curricular activities that students value and support. Staff give generously of their time to ensure that students develop self-confidence and community leadership skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Vulnerable students are monitored closely, and as a result, they make similar progress to other students in the school and nationally. Slow readers make good progress on the reading recovery programme. Procedures for monitoring and supporting looked after children are also effective and child protection procedures are fully in place. The school effectively monitors and promotes health and safety. Bullying is decreasing and students value the approach the school takes in dealing with it. Robust systems to monitor, track and support students' academic progress are now embedded so that any underachievement of students is quickly identified and action is taken to address this. Challenging academic targets are met by most students and this is helping to raise their achievement. Learning mentors and coaches provide good targeted support to those students that require it. The extensive data available to the school, however, are not used to full effect. There are good links with primary schools and transition to Year 7 is smooth. There is a good programme for careers and work-related learning which is mainly delivered by an enriched personal, social, health and citizenship education course, work experience in Year 10 and external involvement of agencies, colleges and local businesses and companies. Extensive advice and information are readily available and valued by students and parents. The school provides good overall guidance except in the quality of marking of students' work, which is sometimes poor.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior staff and governors have successfully closed Langley High School, and managed the merger of two schools into Oldbury College of Sport. Enormous challenges remain, such as the proposed on-site building programme, but the leadership of the school has demonstrated that it has a good capacity to manage future change.

Leadership and management across the school are constantly improving as managers become more focused on the improvement agenda. Under the skilful leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team, middle managers are growing in confidence and becoming increasingly accountable for standards in their own subjects. The regular cycle of examination analysis, departmental development planning and subject self-evaluation has helped managers to be more critical of the performance of their team. The significant work of managers at all levels

in pulling together staff and students from two schools and creating a strong sense of direction and purpose is to be applauded. However, due to the legacy of underachievement of some students in the past, they are still catching up and, as yet, this progress is not fully reflected in test results.

Strategic planning has had to be extensive in the past to take account of all the issues that needed to be addressed with the start of a new school. The innovative electronic format of the school improvement plan and self-evaluation allows easy access for staff and governors to monitor progress in meeting targets. However, now the school is more established, there are too many issues in the plan to be able to focus the energy of all staff sufficiently in the improvement agenda.

Governance is outstanding. A core of governors is very involved in the life of the school and hold the headteacher to account for standards achieved. They know the school well, monitor its progress, and are fully engaged in all aspects of its development. Most parents report that they receive regular communication from the school through newsletters and telephone calls from staff. Outside professionals who visit the school also speak warmly of their involvement, the dedication of the staff, and the manners of the students. One summed up the impact of the new school as follows: 'It has brought the two communities together.'

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 July 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Oldbury College of Sport, Oldbury, B68 8ED

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me and the other inspectors when we visited your school earlier this term. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what the school could do to improve further.

- You go to a satisfactory and improving school.
- You and your parents are proud to say that you attend Oldbury College of Sport.
- You behave well and are very polite to visitors, but there are a minority of you who need to improve your behaviour in cover teachers' lessons.
- You all looked very smart in your new school uniform.
- Your headteacher leads your school very well and has managed the merger between the two schools successfully.
- The governors of your school are some of the best I have seen and work really hard on your behalf.
- Those of you who need extra help get really good support when you need it.
- Your teachers work hard for you, are very professional and want you to succeed.
- Other adults in the school work well with you and your teachers.
- You have lots of clubs to go to after school.
- You learn well when you assess your own work and explain things to each other.
- Most of you eat a healthy diet and take regular exercise.

In order to make your school even better I have suggested that your headteacher and senior staff do the following things.

- Improve the quality of teaching by marking your work consistently, and by checking regularly throughout lessons that you understand the work and that all of you are suitably challenged.
- Ensure that the plans to improve the school concentrate on a few of the most important issues essential to improve your exam grades.
- Ensure that you and your parents are aware of the importance of regular attendance at school so that you don't get behind with your work.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector